

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS TH US
SUBJECT: VICE PRESIDENT'S VISIT-POSSIBLE SECURITY ASSISTANCE

REF: STATE 76094

SUMMARY: FROM THAI POINT OF VIEW, SECURITY ASSISTANCE WILL BE MAJOR SUBJECT FOR DISCUSSION DURING VICE PRESIDENT'S VISIT. OF SPECIFIC INITIATIVE SUGGESTED REFTEL, DECISION ON SECOND SQUADRON OF F5ES WILL BE APPRECIATED AND WELCOMED BY PRIME MINISTER. HOWEVER, FEEL CHAPPARAL AND COBRA TOW SHOULD NOT BE RAISED BY VICE PRESIDENT. THAI WOULD ALSO WELCOME ASSURANCE FROM VICE PRESIDENT THAT RTG CAN RELY ON ACCESS TO US FOR PURCHASE OF NEEDED CONVENTIONAL MILITARY EQUIPMENT AND THAT US WILL CONTINUE FMS CREDITS AND IMET PROGRAM FOR THAILAND. PARTICULARLY, KRIANGSAK WOULD APPRECIATE INDICATION THAT USG WOULD GIVE FAVORABLE CONSIDERATION TO INCREASE IN FMS CREDITS FOR THAILAND. END SUMMARY.

1. EMBASSY APPRECIATES SUGGESTED POSSIBLE SECURITY ASSISTANCE INITIATIVES CONTAINED REFTEL. SECURITY ASSISTANCE IS ONE OF SUBJECTS KRIANGSAK INTENDS TO RAISE WITH VICE PRESIDENT MONDALE. HE WILL DEEPLY APPRECIATE RECEIVING MESSAGE FROM VICE PRESIDENT ON
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F5ES. HOWEVER, FOR EASONS DESCRIBED BELOW, WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT EITHER THE CHAPPARAL SYSTEM OR THE COBRA TOW SHOULD BE RAISED BY THE VICE PRESIDENT.

2. F5E AIRCRAFT: KRIANGSAK WILL APPRECIATE LEARNING FROM VICE PRESIDENT THAT P&B DATA WILL BE FORTHCOMING AND THAT USG IS PREPARED TO APPROVE SALE OF SECOND

SQUADRON OF F5ES. WE SUGGEST, HOWEVER, THAT THE VICE PRESIDENT CONVEY THIS IN THE CONTEXT OF OVERALL US POSITION OF PREPAREDNESS TO RESPOND POSITIVELY TO RTG REQUESTS RATHER THAN IMPLYING THAT IT IS THE RESULT OF AN EXCEPTIONAL POLICY DECISION. INDEED, THAI WOULD BE PERPLEXED IF WE REFUSED THE F5E'S GIVEN OUR LONGSTANDING SECURITY RELATIONSHIP AND THEIR DEPENDENCE ON US ORIGIN EQUIPMENT.

3. CHAPPARAL: SINCE FIRST REQUESTING INFORMATION ON THE CHAPPARAL IN EARLY 1977, THE RTG HAS DISPLAYED NO SURTHER INTEREST IN THE SYSTEM, EVEN INFORMALLY. GIVEN THEIR LACK OF RECENTLY EXPRESSED INTEREST AND OUR OWN DOUBTS AS TO THE COST EFFECTIVENESS OF THE CHAPPARAL AS A POINT DEFENSE SYSTEM, WE RECOMMEND AGAINST THE VICE PRESIDENT INITIATING DISCUSSION OF THIS TOPIC WITH THE PRIME MINISTER.

4. COBRA TOW: THE RTG HAS EXPRESSED INTEREST IN A NUMBER OF POSSIBLE AIRBORNE ANTI-ARMOR SYSTEMS BUT HAS SO FAR NOT RAISED THE COBRA TOW HERE. WE HAVE FELT THAT THE ARMORED THREAT IS SLIGHT AND HAVE NOT ENCOURAGED COSTLY INVESTMENT IN AIRBORNE ANTI-ARMOR SYSTEMS. THE RTG ASKED FOR AND RECEIVED INFORMATION ON THE GROUND MOUNTED TOW AND SUBSEQUENTLY SHOWED NO INTEREST, PRESUMABLYX BECAUSE OF COST CONSIDERATIONS. GIVEN THE
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COST OF THE COBRA TOW, STRINGENT PILOT REQUIREMENTS AND COSTLY SUPPORT PLUS THE FACT THAT THAI HAVE TAKEN NO INITIATIVE ON IT, WE DO NOT THINK THE VICE PRESIDENT SHOULD TAKE THE LEAD. THE THAI HAVE RECENTLY REQUESTED P&B ON ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY-TWO 106 MM RECOILESS RIFLES, A MORE CONVENTIONAL AND AFFORDABLE ANTI-TANK WEAPON. THE VICE PRESIDENT COULD INDICATE THAT THERE WILL BE NO DIFFICULTY WITH THIS REQUEST.

5. ASSURANCE OF ACCESS AND CONTINUATION OF FMS CREDITS: THE PRIME MINISTER WOULD WELCOME A CLEAR ASSURANCE BY THE VICE PRESIDENT THAT THE US UNDERSTANDS THAILAND'S SECURITY SITUATION AND THE NEED FOR THAILAND TO MAINTAIN A BALANCED AND ADEQUATE DEFENSE POSTURE AND THAT, WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF OUR ARMS TRANSFER POLICIES, THE USG WILL MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO BE RESPONSIVE TO THAILAND'S LEGITIMATE DEFENSE NEEDS. THE THAI ARE UNCERTAIN OVER US POLICIES AND SEE THEMSELVES BELEAGUERED BY UNFRIENDLY NEIGHBORS SUPPORTING A FESTERING INTERNAL INSURGENCY. KRIANGSAK WILL LOOK FOR ASSURANCE BY THE VICE PRESIDENT ON THIS AS WELL AS A CLEAR INDICATION THAT WE INTEND TO CONTINUE OUR FMS CREDITS IMET PROGRAMS FOR THAILAND.

6. INCREASED FMS CREDITS: ALTHOUGH WE HAVE FIRMLY DEFLECTED THAI EXPECTATIONS OF ANY INCREASE IN FMS CREDITS, WE HAVE HAD CLEAR INDICATION FROM TWO DIFFERENT SENIOR THAI MILITARY OFFICERS THAT THE RTG WOULD LIKE TO OBTAIN 50 MILLION DOLLARS IN FMS CREDITS FOR FY 79. WE APPRECIATE AND HAVE EXPLAINED TO THE THAI THAT AN INCREASE IN FMS CREDIT LEVELS IS NOT LIKELY. STILL, WE EXPECT KRIANGSAK WILL BROACH THE SUBJECT WITH THE VICE PRESIDENT. AN INDICATION BY THE VICE PRESIDENT THAT THE USG WOULD CONSIDER A SMALL INCREASE (E.G. 5-10 MILLION DOLLARS) IN FMS CREDITS, EVEN ON A ONE-TIME BASIS FROM FY 78 OR FY 79 FALLOUT, WOULD DEMONSTRATE TO THE THAI THAT WE ARE NOT RIGIDLY APPLYING OUR POLICY WITHOUT COGNIZANCE OF THEIR PARTICULAR SITUATION. WHITEHOUSE
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